

“RUTGERS CORNER”

‘Managing Sports Turf’ by Dr. James
Murphy, Specialist in Turfgrass Management

Maintaining a dense, vigorous, and well-groomed turfgrass cover is a primary requisite for high-quality athletic field playing surfaces. Turfgrass appeals to spectators and boasts community pride. Of greater importance, however, may be the soft, resilient surface, which provides a cushion to protect athletes against injuries and not only helps maintain footing, but is ideal for various athletic activities. It also eliminates the nuisances of dust and mud. For a turfgrass cover to fulfill these functions satisfactorily, proper establishment and maintenance practices must be used. Investments in establishing, renovating, or reconstructing athletic field turf are wasted unless an adequate maintenance program is established.

Effective turf maintenance requires an integrated program oriented toward producing favorable conditions for the development and growth of a vigorous healthy turf. All too often, only certain aspects of turf maintenance receive attention, due to budget limitations or interests of the people responsible for its care. A suitable maintenance program requires a budget that supports the materials, equipment, and personnel, including a conscientious and knowledgeable supervisor, to accommodate a variety of procedures. The maintenance program should include attention, at minimum, to the following factors.

Soil Test. Soil test results are required to determine the need for liming, the rate of lime, the appropriate ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium for the fertilizer grade used (e.g., 4-1-2, 2-1-2, 2-0-1, etc.), and the rate of fertilizer application (pounds of product per 1000 square feet of turf). Soil test results provide the information needed to select the fertilizer that will provide the appropriate balance of essential nutrients.

Mowing. Proper mowing height and frequency is critical to the stress tolerance of turf. Mowing operators should be thoroughly trained for proper operation and be able to recognize the need for mowing adjustments.

Watering. Where irrigation is available, apply water as infrequently as necessary to maintain proper soil moisture and avoid drought stress. A thorough watering once or twice a week during drought periods is preferable to light daily sprinkling. Keep in mind that watering is of little or no value if liming, fertilizing, and mowing are neglected or done improperly.

Aerification/Cultivation. Regular cultivation is necessary on athletic fields subjected to intense traffic, especially when the soil is susceptible to severe compaction. Use equipment capable of extracting ½- to ¾-inch diameter cores of soil to a depth of at least 2 to 3 inches. Frequency of aerification is determined by the intensity of field use and severity of compaction. High-priority fields that receive intensive use will most likely

benefit from two to four aerification treatments per season. Spring and fall are the best seasons to implement this procedure. ;)

‘Rutgers Adamsville Project’ FIELD DAY – March 28 – Bridgewater, NJ Call (908) 730-9419 To Register

Rutgers University in cooperation with Sports Field Managers’ Association of New Jersey will be holding a field day at Bridgewater Raritan School Districts-Adamsville School located on Route 28 in Bridgewater [exit 13 Interstate 287]. The event will be held on March 28th from 9:30am to 1:pm.

This cooperative athletic field renovation project was initiated in the summer of 2001. The goal of this project is to educate school systems, parks & recreation departments etc.. on cost effective renovation procedures for modest budget athletic fields. An additional goal of this project is to educate stakeholders on the importance of creating a team environment among the maintenance staff, administrators and the coaches as a cost-effective method to enhance the playability of athletic fields. The field day will include a review of the previous renovation procedures along with discussions on maintenance schedule for the coming year. Issues such as integrated pest management, fertility, irrigation and field design to maximize playability will be reviewed and discussed. Speakers will include Dr. Jim Murphy, Turfgrass Extension Specialist and Dr. John Grande from Rutgers University along with Fred Castenschiold and Jim Hermann, Sports Field Managers Association of NJ, Board of Directors. ;)

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